



**Advocating for Rights &
Promoting Abilities of
People with Disabilities
since 1999**

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MEDIA RELEASE

People with disability are disproportionately impacted by climate change and natural disasters

Today an international audience heard from DPA National Coordinator, Nelly Caleb, that people with disabilities remain one of the populations most at-risk in times of natural disaster. Furthermore, due to the lack of concrete data, statistics and information, people with disability remain excluded from most humanitarian responses.

The meeting of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva heard directly from Ms Caleb about the situation in Vanuatu during and since Cyclone Pam devastated many areas. People with disability in Vanuatu have reported lack of access to fresh water and food, lack of sanitation facilities and temporary housing that is ill suited to their needs.

“To overcome barriers we need to ensure full inclusion and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of international, regional and national humanitarian planning and response policies,” Ms Caleb said.

“We also need to take advantage of the rebuilding effort and adhere to the principle of Build Back Better, as outlined in the Sendai Framework, with explicit reference persons with disabilities and universal design.”

Ms Caleb also called for all humanitarian programs and activities to integrate accessibility standards. They cannot be seen as an afterthought but built into policies and procedures.

Ms Caleb is also the Co-Chair of the Pacific Disability Forum and brought the views of people with disability across the Pacific to the meeting. She noted that:

- Persons with disabilities are often considered in humanitarian contexts as receivers of support, rather than as key actors for instance
- Officers did not see the importance to include persons with disability in disaster response, they have their own excuses
- Persons with disabilities in remote area and hard-to-reach areas are at greater risk in crises due to barriers in terms of accessibility, communication and lack of inclusion, in particular women and children, indigenous and elderly persons with disabilities.
- People with disabilities and older people are left out during the distribution of relief supplies
- Sites of distributions of relieve supplies are not accessible, and often our members missed their share.

All stakeholders in disaster management need to work together to address these concerns. The DPA will work with the Vanuatu Government, aid agencies such as the Red Cross and CBM, and the community to ensure that disability inclusion is a central part of planning and engagement moving forwards.

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